

# FORT SAM HOUSTON WEDDING GUIDELINES

15 September 2006

These guidelines provides assistance in wedding preparation at Fort Sam Houston. For more information, contact the Garrison Chaplain's Office @210-221-2754/2755 or one of the Chapel Centers listed below.

AMMED Regimental Chapel  
Bldg 1398  
315 Garden Avenue FSH  
Tel: 210-221-3390; DSN 471-3390

DODD Field Chapel  
Bldg 1721  
3600 Dodd Boulevard FSH  
Tel: 210-5010/5423; DSN 471-5010

Main Post (Gift) Chapel  
Bldg 2200  
1605 Wilson Road FSH  
Tel: 210-221-2754; DSN 471-2754

Brooke Army Medical Center  
BAMC Chapel  
Bldg 3600  
3851 Roger Brooke Drive  
Tel: 210-916-1105; DSN 429-1105

There are no fees for Chapel usage, but donations are accepted to the Fort Sam Houston Consolidated Chaplains' Fund. Army Chaplains are not obligated to perform a marriage ceremony that is not in compliance with ecclesiastical requirements, dictates of conscience, and/or professional judgment. Chapel civil weddings are not authorized (Judge, Justice of the Peace, etc)

## WEDDING COUPLE ELIGIBILITY

The following must have a valid DoD ID card (a front-side photo copy of card will be made):

1. Department of Defense personnel
2. Active Guard-Reserve, Reserve, National Guard, Coast Guard
3. Retired DOD, Reserve, Guard, or Coast Guard
4. Dependents of criteria 1-3 with DoD family member ID card.

## RESERVATIONS

The Chapels on Fort Sam Houston may be reserved up to eight-twelve months in advance. Once you have a wedding date and know which Chapel you want to use, please contact that Chapel's NCOIC. The Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) at the requested Chapel will assist you in reserving the Chapel for your wedding. **In all cases, present proof of eligibility (valid ID card) at the time of the request for use of the chapel.** Once proof of eligibility has been established, the staff will schedule weddings on a first come first serve basis. **NO CHAPEL CAN BE RESERVED BY PHONE.**

For Roman Catholic Parties whose future spouse or themselves had a PREVIOUS BOND OF MARRIAGE, NO CHAPEL CAN BE RESERVED without first being cleared that an annulment (formal or informal) has been granted.

## SCHEDULING

Regularly scheduled chapel sponsored programs have priority over requested wedding dates and times. Weddings and rehearsals will not be scheduled on the following days:

1. Friday evenings at Main Post Chapel
2. Any Federal Holiday (Independence Day, Thanksgiving Eve or Day, Labor and Memorial Days, etc.)
3. Christmas Eve and Day
4. New Year's Eve and Day
5. Ash Wednesday and Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday)
6. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (September)

Wedding parties will conduct rehearsals on Fridays (1500-1600 and 1600-1700), weddings on Saturdays (morning/afternoon). One may request additional time slots subject to chapel staff availability. Chapels are available to the wedding party one hour prior to the scheduled service and one hour and thirty minutes for the service to include post-

wedding photography. **The afternoon wedding must cease all activity by 1630 regardless of start time to allow for Catholic Mass setup.**

All couples married by Protestant Chaplains at Fort Sam Houston are required to attend pre-marital counseling either by their clergy, sponsoring-Chaplain, or by attendance to monthly pre-marriage training classes by the Family Life Chaplain at the Dodd Field Chapel (we recommend participation in the latter at least 3 months prior to the wedding date). Roman Catholic Chaplains require couples to attend the San Antonio Archdiocese Primary Marriage Preparation program. The marriage party must request information from the Priest at least four months prior to the planned wedding date.

**All weddings if not performed by a Fort Sam Houston chaplain are required a sponsoring Unit Ministry Team (UMT) either Garrison or Tenant. The Installation Chaplain permits civilian clergy and chaplains from other military services and installations to conduct wedding ceremonies at Fort Sam Houston chapels. FSH CHs (Garrison or Tenant) and sponsoring chaplains will provide their own UMT support. Keys are issued by chapel NCOICs.**

## **FAITH GROUP AND USE OF CHAPELS**

### **JEWISH**

Rabbis have specific requirements when conducting weddings for Jewish personnel. Whenever there is no Jewish Chaplain assigned to Fort Sam Houston, the chapel staff will aid you contacting the Jewish Lay Leader for assistance.

### **PROTESTANT**

Protestant Chaplains assigned to Fort Sam Houston conduct Christian weddings only. Those who desire an assigned chaplain to conduct their wedding should be committed to the Church and active in one of the Chapel's worshipping communities. If you worship elsewhere, we expect you to utilize your Pastor to officiate.

### **ROMAN CATHOLIC**

Contact a Roman Catholic Chaplain assigned to Fort Sam Houston before making a chapel reservation for a specific date. The Dioceses of Texas have adopted common guidelines for Roman Catholics in preparation for Christian marriage. Non-active duty military priests are required delegation from the active duty military priest.

1. All couples will contact a Priest 4 to 6 months prior to a wedding date
2. Attend an initial interview
3. Conduct primary preparation
4. Attend Pastoral follow-up interviews

Marriage outside of the Church does not constitute cause to omit or waive the normal preparation process, except in the case of stable, long-standing unions. For validations following annulments or dissolutions, proper pastoral care must be given. In no case shall the validation occur until the 6 months have passed from the date of the marriage outside the Church. Any previous marriage (Roman Catholic or non- Roman Catholic) is an obstacle to marriage in the Roman Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the Priest the fact of the previous marriage(s) in an effort to seek resolution.

### **OTHER FAITH GROUPS**

Coordinate with the Installation/Unit/Sponsoring Chaplain and your faith group to meet appropriate requirements.

## **MARRIAGE LICENSE PROCEDURES**

A valid TEXAS marriage license is required for weddings on Fort Sam Houston. The license is available at any State of Texas County Clerk's Office. In Bexar County call 335-2221 for information on obtaining the license. Bring the license to the officiating clergy at least one day prior to the ceremony. The authorized State of Texas officiating clergy will sign, date, and return the license to the bride/groom at the conclusion of the service. It is the wedding party's responsibility to return the completed license to applicable County Clerk's Office.

## **MUSIC/MUSICIANS/ORGANIST**

The wedding party is responsible to contract the organist/pianist. It is appropriate that any music one uses in the Chapel wedding be of a spiritual nature, supporting the focus of worship and prayer. A chapel wedding, in contrast to a civil ceremony, is an occasion of corporate worship. Officiating clergy and chapel organist make music final decisions in

consultation with the sponsoring chaplain. Only those organists familiar with the Main Post Chapel pipe organ and who have approval from the Main Post Chapel Protestant Chaplain will use the system. Pianos are available for use by outside musicians unfamiliar with the Main Post Chapel pipe organ. A digital piano/organ and upright/ grand pianos are available at AMEDDC&S, Dodd Field, and Main Post chapels.

### **WEDDING COORDINATORS**

Wedding coordinators assist in the preparation and conduct of one's wedding service. If one intends to use a Fort Sam Houston chapel facility, we encourage one to secure the services of a wedding coordinator however it is not a requirement. If one chooses not to contract services of a wedding coordinator, one must make other arrangements to perform the services outlined.

1. Review wedding guidelines with the wedding party.
2. Familiarize the wedding party with the chapel facility and equipment.
3. Prepare and open the chapel for rehearsal and the wedding.
4. Set up the altar, candlesticks, candles, sound system, kneelers, and lights.
5. Coordinate with the clergy.
6. Assist with proper protocol for the ceremony (placement of attendants, ushering, and seating arrangements).
7. Ensure that the rehearsal and wedding begin and end at the scheduled times.
8. Return Chapel to condition appropriate for the next worship service.
9. Close and secure the chapel.

To secure the services of a wedding coordinator, contact the NCOIC at the chapel in which one are marrying. The NCOIC will provide names of the wedding coordinators available for contracting. The chapel will not be responsible for establishing a contract. The wedding party will contact a coordinator to secure the services and arrange the required payment. The chapel is responsible only to provide to the wedding party a list of possible resources.

### **CHAPEL USAGE**

#### **The following are prohibited**

- Candles placed on the end of the pews at any time as per FSH Fire Chief
- Removing Chapel Center sabers from premises; they will not be hand-receipted for outside use.
- Alcoholic beverages except for Sacramental purposes
- Tobacco use
- Firearms, however, ceremonial swords may be used for a saber arch
- Removal of banners, seasonal decorations, and alterations to sound equipment
- Use of thumbtacks, pins, nails, tape (without approval), or glue on any of the chapel furnishings and walls/pillars.
- Flower arrangements without plastic placemats
- The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals on Chapel grounds to include the center aisle
- No displacement of Chapel flags (US, State, Army, etc), in particular, rotunda flags of Main Post Chapel
- Movement chancel furnishings (altar, pulpit, lectern, and/or items used for weekly worship without permission of the Chaplain Officer in Charge
- Main Post Chapel Roman Catholic and Jewish denominational-specific worship areas without authorization from the Installation Chaplain, Garrison Chaplain Priest, and the Jewish Lay Leader
- The use of Dodd Field Chapel Watchcare Room as a changing room (for safety reasons, there are no exceptions)
- Taping, gluing, stapling, tacking, etc decorations walls, pillars, and furnishings
- Any additional prohibitions as directed by Chapel Center UMTs (e.g. -- fellowship hall usage)
- Tying off roped-off seating areas (prevents worshippers from exiting during emergency evacuation)

Guidelines for photography are determined by officiating clergy/chaplain.

**Officiating clergy and the sponsoring UMT are responsible to insure that the sanctity of the chapel is not violated. Both are the approving authority in matters of chapel etiquette, wedding music, photography, electrical recordings, etc.**